



FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSMAN CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Dear Friend:

We face huge challenges at home and abroad. The new Congress presents a fresh opportunity for our nation to address those challenges and get to work on some important priorities.

It is essential that the Congress begin to take its oversight responsibilities seriously. For too long, the Congress has acted as a rubber stamp for the Bush Administration and failed to exercise its responsibilities as a separate branch of government. That will change. It is critical that we hold the Executive Branch accountable for its actions. Nowhere is that more true than with respect to the failed policies in Iraq. The tired refrain of "stay the course" is a slogan, not a strategy. More of the same is unacceptable. We must change course and Congress must help lead the way.

We must also hold the Congress accountable for its conduct. The scandals that have rocked the Capitol have further eroded public confidence in the legislative process. The Congress must enact tough new lobbying and ethics reform measures to end the abuses. I am pleased to be a sponsor of many of the initiatives to clean up the process. We must have a system that places the public interest above narrow special interests. This will be the first order of business for the new Congress.

I am also pleased to report that the incoming 110th Congress will work to enact a series of other important initiatives during the first one hundred hours of the new session. I have had the privilege of working with my colleagues to shape this agenda, which will include: making college more affordable; cutting taxpayer subsidies for the oil and gas industry and redirecting the savings toward renewable energy; increasing the federal minimum wage; implementing the recommendations of the bipartisan 9-11 Commission; and empowering Medicare to negotiate better prices for seniors in the prescription drug program. We also intend to restore fiscal discipline to the Congress by imposing a "pay as you go" rule to end the reckless policies that have created a staggering national debt. More information on these measures is included elsewhere in this report.

These measures are the start of a more ambitious agenda. We have much work ahead to restore America's moral standing around the world and meet our shared responsibilities here at home.

I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve our community in the United States Congress and I will do my best to uphold the trust and confidence you have placed in me.

Sincerely,

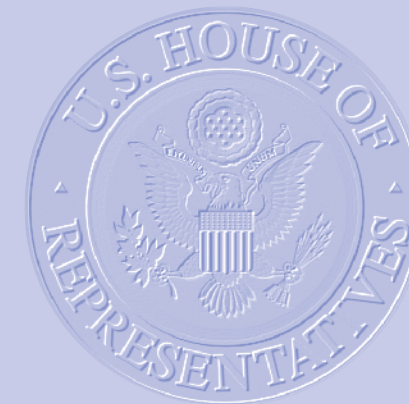
Congressman Chris Van Hollen

Congressman Chris Van Hollen
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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A Community Update from

Congressman
Chris Van Hollen



Congressman Van Hollen meets with students and other residents of Maryland's Eighth Congressional District to discuss important legislative initiatives and the services he and his staff provide to constituents.



Maryland's Eighth Congressional District

Legislative Issues

Congressman Van Hollen played an active and important role in shaping the legislative agenda for the opening weeks of the new Congress, which will be sworn in on January 4, 2007. Much of the following agenda will be acted on by the House of Representatives during the first 100 hours of the 110th Congress:

National Security

There will be an end to the practice of rubberstamping White House policies with respect to Iraq and national security. The new Congress will immediately begin a vigorous review of the Administration's failed policies in Iraq and the recommendations made by the Baker-Hamilton Commission. The new House will also begin to implement key recommendations of the independent bipartisan 9-11 Commission, including a proposal to strengthen the oversight and budgetary powers of the Intelligence Committee.

Lobbying and Ethics Reform

The new Congress will enact lobbying, ethics, and procedural reforms that change the way Congress does its business and help prevent egregious abuses. Reforms include: increasing transparency and public disclosure, banning certain lobbying practices, adopting portions of the Van Hollen amendment to prevent self-dealing through the earmark process, ending the "dead of night" legislating used to pass complex legislation without adequate review, and mandating open Conference Committee meetings so special interest provisions cannot be secretly slipped into bills behind closed doors. Rep. Van Hollen is also pushing for significant reforms in the campaign finance system to reduce the influence of special interests.

Making College More Affordable

The last Congress slashed support for the federal student loan program by over \$13 billion. The new Congress will make college more affordable by reducing the interest

rates on subsidized student loans and expanding the tax deduction for college tuition. The successful Van Hollen amendment, which closed loopholes that had been exploited by certain lenders at the expense of students and taxpayers, will help fund this initiative.

Greater Energy Independence

America must reduce its dependence on fossil fuels to strengthen national security and prevent the devastating consequences of global climate change. The new Congress will begin this long overdue effort by repealing the huge tax breaks for the oil and gas industry that were included in the Bush Administration's energy bills. The savings will be used to encourage the development of renewable energy sources and greater use of energy-efficient products.

More Affordable Health Care

The Department of Veterans Affairs and HMOs use their bargaining power to reduce the cost of prescription drugs for their patients. At the behest of the pharmaceutical industry, the Republican-led Congress barred the Medicare program from using its leverage to negotiate lower prices. The new Congress will put seniors first by eliminating that restriction. Rep. Van Hollen also supports the re-importation of prescription drugs from Canada and certain other countries in order to reduce prices for all consumers.

Economic Opportunity and Fairness

The purchasing power of the current federal minimum wage of \$5.15 has fallen to the lowest level since the 1950s, leaving millions of working Americans below the federal poverty level. The new Congress will raise the minimum

wage to \$7.25 and begin to eliminate tax giveaways that reward companies that move American jobs overseas.

Boost Medical Research

The new Congress will enact legislation to promote federal support for stem cell research that offers real hope to millions of American families who suffer from devastating diseases. Rep. Van Hollen also supports a significant boost in funding for the critically important research done at the National Institutes of Health.

Fiscal Discipline

It is simply wrong to pass along a huge national debt to the next generation. Governing requires tough choices and setting priorities. The new House will put the federal budget on a "pay-as-you-go" basis to impose greater fiscal discipline and require that both tax cuts and spending increases be paid for.

Constituent Service Guide

“My door is open to you. Please contact my office if you have a problem with a federal agency or want to share your opinions or concerns.”

— Congressman Chris Van Hollen

Here are just some of the areas with which we can help you:



Congressman Van Hollen speaks with a student about the importance of education.

- Social Security and Medicare – including the new prescription drug benefit
- Federal Student Loans
- Federal Employee Issues
- Veterans and Military Assistance
- Passport Applications
- Immigration
- Internal Revenue Service
- Information About Legislative Issues
- Visits to the U.S. Capitol
- U.S. Service Academy Nominations

Contact Congressman Van Hollen

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Congressman Van Hollen speaks with constituents about some of the issues he is working on in Congress.



Congressman Van Hollen speaks with constituents about efforts in Congress to provide affordable health care to seniors.